



CASA



The Court Appointed Special Advocate Program for Children

VOL. 1 ISSUE 1

[HTTP://COURTS.DELAWARE.GOV/CASA](http://courts.delaware.gov/casa)

SPRING 2008

24 Years a CASA (and Counting)



"Being a CASA volunteer for abused/neglected children is the most rewarding experience."

Mary Ann Hammond

I became a CASA volunteer in November of 1984 and received my first case one week later. For twelve years prior, I was the Sussex County Recorder of Deeds, a four-year elected position. Upon retiring in 1984, I found myself with time on my hands. I became restless, feeling rather useless and unproductive. It wasn't long before my prayers were answered. An article in the paper caught my attention: "Court Appointed Special Advocate volunteers needed in Family Court to represent neglected/abused children." Right then I knew in my soul I wanted to be a CASA volunteer.

My first case was a custody case between a mother and a maternal grandmother involving a four-year-old little girl. I was the CASA for approximately four years. After many court hearings, the grandmother was awarded custody.

In my 24 years as a CASA, I have advocated for 31 children involving 18 families. In a number of cases I was the CASA for several years until, at times, I felt I was a member of the family.

There are actually six cases that were extremely challenging. I would have to say it was my first case, as I preciously stated, that really stands out. I was a brand new, nervous, wet-behind-the-ears-want-to-do-everything-right volunteer. The mother of this four-year-old daughter was a quadriplegic. The girl's grandmother petitioned for custody. Since the father was living in the apartment with the mother and his daughter, I recommended custody to the mother with close monitoring. And believe me, I monitored closely. Eventually the father left and it became necessary to place the child with her grandmother, with visitation by the mother. This mother was a survivor despite serious hospitalizations. During my four-year involvement I grew to admire her greatly.

I presently have one case involving two children, a boy fourteen and a girl eleven. The children now live with a relative out of state.

Reflecting back on these 24 years, I did not expect the challenges I experienced, starting with my first case. It didn't take me long to broaden my shoulders, take many deep breaths, and learn to keep an open mind until all the fact were revealed. Each case comes with a unique set of circumstances and characters. No two cases are alike. I've learned to always expect the unexpected. Being a CASA volunteer is a continuous learning process.

For me the best part of being a CASA volunteer is experiencing a child adopted or placed

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**CASA**

Delaware CASA

New Castle County CASA/Family Court

New Castle Co. Courthouse
500 N. King Street
Wilmington, DE 19801

CASA Offices

Suite 901

Phone:

255-0378, 255-0379

255-0380, 255-0381

255-0461

Administrative Offices

Suite 3500

State Director: 255-0390

Kent County

CASA/Family Court

400 Court Street

Dover, DE 19901

Phone:

672-1037, 672-1067

672-1114

Sussex County

CASA/Family Court

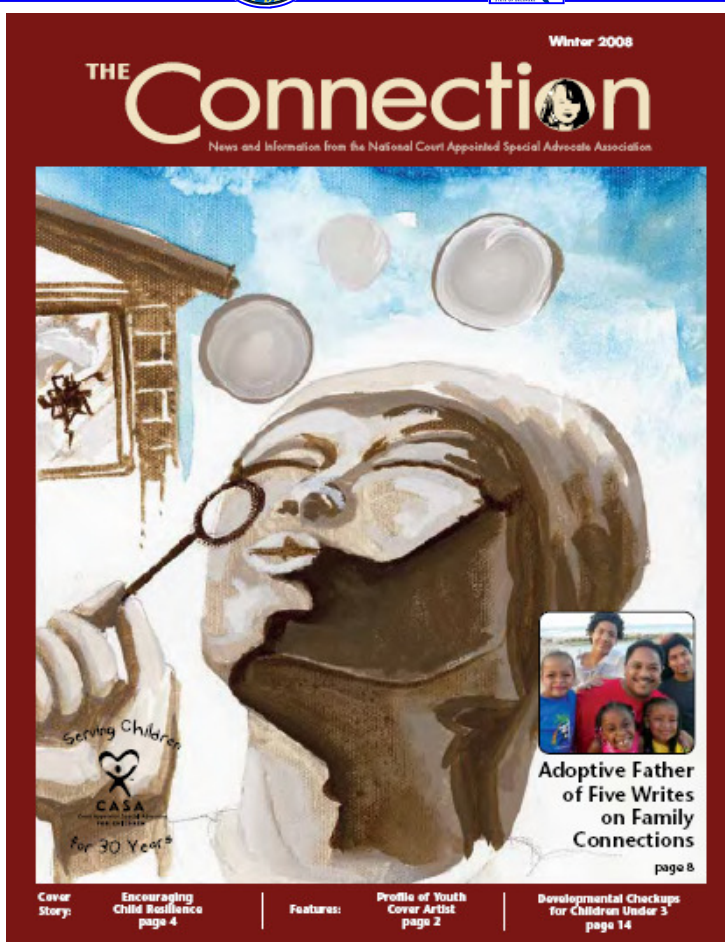
22 The Circle

Georgetown, DE 19947

Phone:

855-7410, 855-7411

855-7415



The *Connection* magazine, a National CASA publication, is designed to keep CASA programs, members, & the public abreast of the latest news & developments affecting CASAs work with abused and neglected children. Access the latest issue at www.nationalcasa.org/about_us/publications_connection.html

CASA RADIO

Downstate, CASA advertises on several Delmarva radio stations for volunteers and support and to promote our message. CASA is also participating in the annual Hispanic Fair sponsored by La Exitosa 930 AM on April 20th at the Delaware State Fairgrounds.



Profiles in Courage

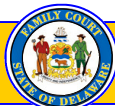
(Mary Ann Hammond: 24 Years a CASA, continued from page 1)

in a safe, nurturing, and loving home—and knowing that I had a part in making it happen. That is my “warm fuzzy.” I like to call it my paycheck.

I am 71 years of age now. I’ve been very happily married, second time around, for 27 years. I have two grown daughters and three grandchildren. I have three grown stepchildren I feel are my own and seven step-grandchildren and holding. My husband, Jack, and I live outside of Millsboro on the Indian River. I’m an avid reader of intrigue novels. Three of my favorite authors are Tom Clancy, W.E.B. Griffin, and Clive Cussler. Since we’re both retired we travel as much as possible. I’ve been a Delaware Hospice patient care volunteer for 21 years. That is a challenge of a totally different nature.

In closing, I would like to suggest to present and future CASA volunteers to treat your case families with respect, be a good listener, be patient, persevere, discuss your case often with your coordinator, and do not expect every case to conclude as you recommend. Being a CASA volunteer for abused/neglected children is the most rewarding and sometimes frustrating volunteer program I have had the privilege to participate in.

I am so grateful I read that article.

**CASA**

Message from the Chief Judge Chandlee Johnson Kuhn

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Court Appointed Special Advocate Program (CASA) becoming a statewide program in Delaware. The program has made great strides over the last 25 years, increasing its full-time, state-funded coordinators to nine and its volunteer pool to over 200 statewide. In 2007, the CASA program served 549 of Delaware's children.

I am so pleased to share with you the first issue of the Family Court CASA Program Newsletter, an annual publication highlighting accomplishments, events, and information about the Delaware CASA program. In this newsletter you will find information about upcoming trainings and conferences, updates on Court Improvement Program activities, volunteer opportunities, achievements and awards received, and much more.

Ensuring that all children in the care of the Division of Family Services are represented and have a voice is our goal. CASA is helping us accomplish that goal. The work the CASA program does is so important, and I am proud to share their progress in this newsletter. I hope you find this resource helpful and thank you for all you do to help the children in Delaware. Please share this newsletter with your friends, family and colleagues who may be interested in becoming a CASA volunteer.

Kindly,



**Chief Justice
Chandlee Johnson Kuhn**

Greetings Volunteers & CASA Supporters

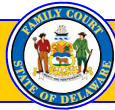


Christina Harrison

As the New CASA Statewide Director, I am honored to continue the great work with CASA as we help abused and neglected children within the State of Delaware. Our goals include continuing our representation for children, recruiting volunteers, and educating the community. During 2007 we were able to see the fruits of our efforts through the Recruitment Plans to expose the program through various media outlets. We placed ads on the DART buses external and internal posting, we placed ads in the *Dover Post Cape Gazette*, *Delaware Today Magazine*, and *Metro Kids*, as well as online banners with *Delaware Today* and the *News Journal*. We also participated in over seven various community activities in our efforts to recruit and expose the great works of our program. As a result we are growing, and we will continue to grow as we speak out for children.

But this is all to the great work contributed by a awesome staff team and volunteer resource we have with the State of Delaware CASA Program. I extend gratitude to the volunteers who have given tremendous time and energy to the organization and the children. It is remarkable that this year we are celebrating 25 years of one unified program within three counties. In addition, we are excited about this newsletter, with it also promoting the events and various activities of our state program. Please take the time to look further in the newsletter to see all we have done and continue to do. I ask that you join us at any of our upcoming events and continue to spread the word that we need more volunteers who will be a powerful voice for children!

Thank you again for you support of the State of Delaware CASA Program.



CASA spreading the word on DART

CASA began an advertisement campaign using internal and external ads on the DART buses throughout New Castle County and interior postings on buses in Kent County. This is another means to recruit volunteers and let the community know who we are. From March 2007 to September 2007 everyone on the streets and on the buses saw our ads riding through their community. It was great to hear a lot of attorneys comment on our ad as they were walking over to court and watching the CASA ad ride by. "Way to go CASA—a great way to get the word out."

Strengthening Co

To and For the Safety, Permanence

The Federal government, through the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families and its Court Improvement Program (CIP) grants and Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR), provides support and encouragement for meaningful, ongoing collaboration in the area of child protection among the Court, the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families (DSCYF), and other partners.

CIP is a grant program established in 1994 by the Federal government in response to dramatic nationwide increases in child abuse and neglect cases. It specifically recognizes the expanded role of State courts in achieving safe, permanent homes for children. Highlights of the Family Court of Delaware's progress since being part of CIP include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Division of Family Services (DFS) cases are each assigned to one judge to preside over all proceedings and hearings for the life of that case.
- More children and parents have legal representation.
- Quarterly CIP meetings are held at each local county level to further discuss local



Court Contributions

Permanency and Well-Being of Children

challenges and advances.

In support of these efforts, the Family Court has applied the CIP grant to foster collaboration, conduct research on strategies and opportunities, and provide the program structure for recording the activities, tracking action items, ensuring follow up, and providing support for work groups and training.

There's still work to be done, including, but not limited to, improving the timeliness of hearings. The Family Court applied for and received two more grants to help in this and other areas. A Data Grant was secured to support collecting data on the hearings. Processing and analyzing that data will help identify areas for improvement.

In addition, a Training Grant was secured to support a strategic plan for several years of educational opportunities, which will ensure that those involved in the Court process—from judicial officers to lawyers to CASAs to social workers—receive education and training in best practices.

The goal of the Court through CIP is to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of children. Much progress has been made through these efforts, and the Court is committed to continually improving in order to best serve the children.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- There are over 200 CASA volunteers in Delaware
- On average, each active CASA is assigned 1-2 cases representing 2-3 children at a time
- In 2007 the Delaware CASA program served 549 children, about half of the abused/neglected children in foster care
- Most volunteers are women, and male volunteers are needed



**CASA**

The State of Delaware Family Court CASA Program presents the

25th Anniversary Celebration Luncheon
Modern Maturity Center in Dover, DE

Friday, September 19, 2008

save
the date!

Our Theme:
“Planting Seeds
of Kindness for
Abused and
Neglected
Children”



Special invitation with RSVP
to follow. For more details,
call (302) 672-1037.

CASA - Celebrating 1 program, 3 counties, 25 years | CASA - Celebrating 1 program, 3 counties, 25 years

25+ Years of Service & Accolades

This September 19th, CASA volunteers from around the state will join with friends, family, and CASA staff and supporters in a celebration luncheon of their devoted service to the children of Delaware. With a theme of “Planting Seeds of Kindness for Abused and Neglected Children,” it’s only befitting to remember the origins of this most necessary program.

The Delaware CASA Program began in New Castle County in 1981 and expanded statewide by 1983. The program has received continuous support from the judiciary, public and private child welfare agencies, and community groups. In 1985, authorizing legislation was passed by the State legislature without a dissenting vote. The statute was revised in 2000, passing without a dissenting vote on July 21st of that year.

Soon after its inception, the Task Force on Permanency Planning for Children residing in Foster Care identified the CASA Program as one of the two most effective programs in Delaware for promoting permanency planning for children, and the General Assembly unanimously passed legislation providing a statutory base for the program. The Delaware CASA program has received the Delaware State Bar Association's prestigious Liberty Bell Award as well as two awards of excellence from the National CASA Association, and a Governor's Award for Outstanding Volunteer Programs.

We’ve come a long way in helping the youth of Delaware. And while there is still much to do, join us as we celebrate how far we have come and how much we’ve accomplished. Planting the seeds of kindness does indeed bring positive growth.

Carl Hill Classic
16th Annual Golf Outing & Silent Auction to benefit the
Family Court CASA Program and the Carl Hill Foundation
Monday, June 2, 2008
Hartfield National Golf Course
Avondale, PA
(Tee-off time is 12 Noon)

NAIFA
NEW CASTLE

Fancy an afternoon away from the office?
Come enjoy a fun afternoon on the green, followed by a silent auction
and dinner. Event proceeds benefit the State of Delaware
Family Court CASA Program and the Carl Hill Foundation.

And for those who want to golf for CASA...

**CASA**

The National CASA Association

Forgotten Children

A Demonstration on the National Mall in Washington, DC

Each day, 850 children enter our nation's foster care system because they cannot live safely at home. The total number of children in the system exceeds 500,000 at any one time, with many children languishing in the system for years without the permanent, caring home every child deserves.

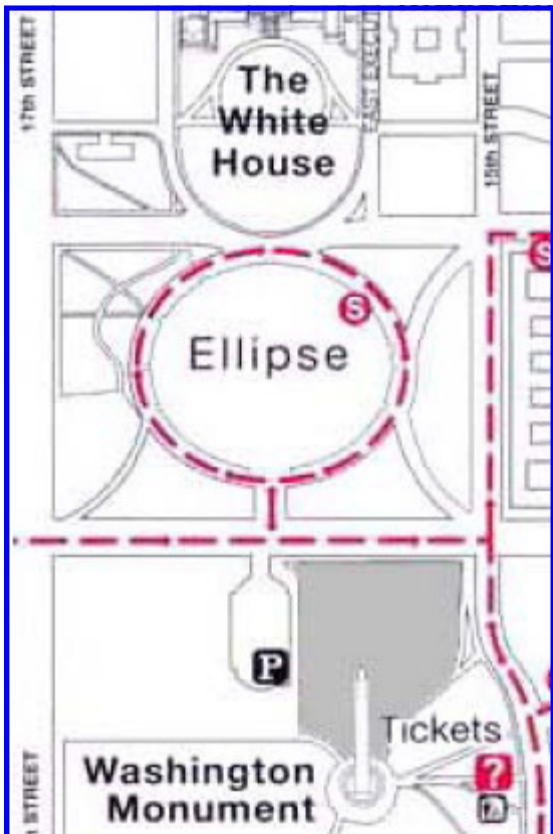
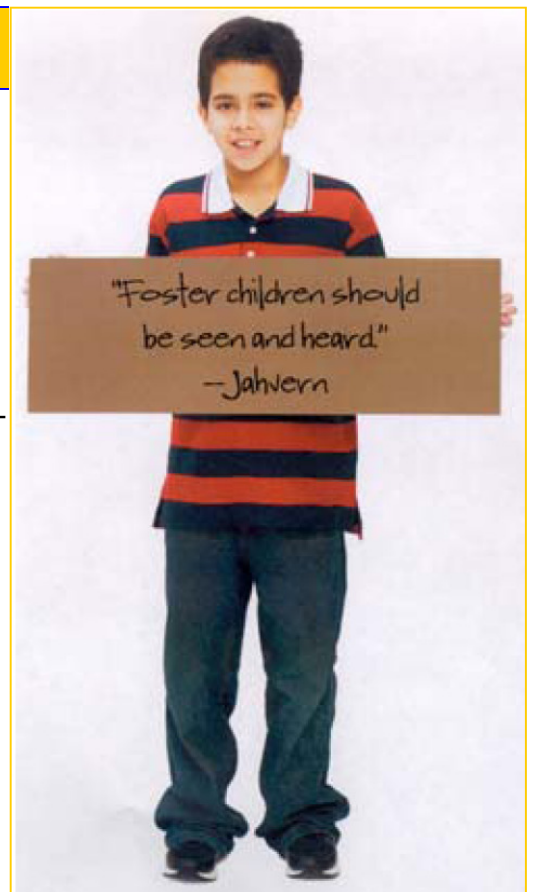
May Is the Month to Stand Up for Foster Children

No child should be forgotten. Yet most of us rarely think of foster children until a tragic story appears in the newspapers. Beginning May 19, 2008, National CASA will produce a dramatic media event in our nation's capital, putting a face to our foster children and encouraging caring citizens to stand up for foster children so they can stand a chance.

4,250 Displays of Foster Children Will Appear at The Washington Monument in Washington, DC

On Monday May 19, 2008, 850 life-size stand-up displays of foster children holding placards will appear at the Washington Monument. These displays represent the children who enter foster care *each day*; 850 additional displays will appear every morning until Friday, May 23rd, when the total will reach 4,250 displays of children. A variety of messages, from a recent national focus group study of current foster youth, will be featured on the displays. Five versions of the child displays will be made to show the diversity of children in foster care.

This demonstration will be at a high-traffic, highly-visible site in the northwest quadrant of the Washington Monument, with the Monument as the backdrop. Sponsors will be prominently featured on a large, on-site banner and in all event materials. Security will be provided by the National Park Service.



A Powerful Backdrop for Media Interviews

The *Forgotten Children* demonstration will provide a powerful backdrop for media interviews (both on the ground and via satellite) with members of Congress, National CASA, volunteers, and executives representing our lead sponsors. Members of Congress will be encouraged to participate in media interviews, accompanied by a foster youth from their state whenever possible. US Senator Patty Murray is very interested in participating. National CASA has arranged for 300 congressional appointments following the demonstration, and the displays will play a prominent role in these meetings.

National Media Has Expressed Interest

ABC's Good Morning America has described this project as "very newsworthy." CBS TV star Danny Pino will kick off the demonstration with a satellite TV media tour conducted live from the demonstration site. National CASA will support this effort with a media blitz using its three national PR agencies of record, whose staff will be in Washington the entire week of the event in order to pitch interviews to local and national media.

The *Forgotten Children* Demonstration Will Go National in 2009

The *Forgotten Children* demonstration will be rolled out to the CASA network in 2009 for local implementation. Maryland CASA will be one of the first to replicate the event at their state capital in connection with their work with the legislature. Many other CASA programs are already excited!



CASA

Court Appointed Special Advocates

New Castle County Courthouse
500 North King Street
Suite 3500
Wilmington, DE 19801

New Castle County
(302) 255-0378

Kent County
(302) 672-1067

Sussex County
(302) 855-7410

<http://casa.courts.delaware.gov>

New Updated & User-Friendly Website!

EVENT CALENDAR!

- 🔊 April: **Child Abuse Awareness Month**
- 🔊 April 15, 17, 23, 24, 25: **New Castle County New Volunteer Evening Trainings**
- 🔊 April 20: **CASA booth at Hispanic Fair in Harrington, Delaware**
- 🔊 April 27-May 3: **National Volunteer Week**
- 🔊 April 28, 30; May 5, 7, 9: **Kent County New Volunteer Daytime Trainings**
- 🔊 May: **National Foster Care Month**
- 🔊 May 1, 2: **CASA booth at Child Protection Conference at Dover Downs**
- 🔊 May 6: **CASA booth at NAIFA Career Conference at Dover Downs**
- 🔊 May 19-23: **National CASA's *Forgotten Children* Demonstration displayed on the National Mall in Washington, DC**
- 🔊 June: **Children's Awareness Month**
- 🔊 June 2: **16th Annual Carl Hill Classic Golf Event**
- 🔊 June 7-10: **National CASA 27th Annual Conference in Washington, DC**
- 🔊 June 13: **Family Court (CIP) Training**
- 🔊 June 17, 18: **CAN 101: Child Abuse and Neglect Training-Kent County**
- 🔊 September 19: **25th Anniversary Celebration Luncheon for Family Court CASA Program**
- 🔊 September 24, 25: **CAN 101: Child Abuse and Neglect Training-Sussex County**
- 🕒 2nd Tuesday of the Month: Kent County In-service Trainings (contact local program for location & time)
- 🕒 3rd Wednesday of the Month: Sussex County In-service Trainings (contact local program for location & time)
- 🕒 5th of the month: Prior month's hours of service from volunteers are due to local programs for all active volunteers